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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF VISITING SACRED SITES AND MAUSOLEUMS: THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

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Abstract. Kazakhstan has sacred sites and mausoleums that are very important to the local people. These holy places have been around for centuries. Help connect the past to the future. Most research so far has focused on their history, architecture, and how they were built. We need to look at how these sacred spaces affect people's minds and emotions. Our article looks at where these holy sites came from, what they mean to people, and tries to organize them into categories. We did this by visiting sacred sites in Kazakhstan, talking to visitors, and asking them questions. We also looked at studies from other countries and compared them to our findings. We found out what motivates people to go on pilgrimages to these sites. We studied how these journeys affect people's minds and social lives. We looked at important issues related to religious experiences in these sacred places. We also looked at the backgrounds of visitors and their attitudes towards pilgrimage. Our research includes an analysis of the psychological states experienced by individuals visiting these Holy Lands. The study was conducted through field studies at sacred sites across Kazakhstan. We also did surveys, interviews and observations of visitors to gain a deeper understanding. Key findings examine the motivations behind pilgrimage and the psychological and social effects of journeys to the Holy Land and mausoleums.

Keywords: folk religiosity; holy land; mausoleum; pilgrimage; prayer; wish; impact.

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ҚАСИЕТТІ ОРЫНДАР МЕН КЕСЕНЕЛЕРГЕ ЗИЯРАТ ЕТУДІҢ ПСИХОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ӘСЕРІ: БІЛІМ ДЕҢГЕЙІНІҢ РӨЛІ

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ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ ВОЗДЕЙСТВИЕ ПОСЕЩЕНИЯ СВЯЩЕННЫХ МЕСТ И МАВЗОЛЕЕВ: РОЛЬ УРОВНЯ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

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Аңдатпа. Халық діндарлығының қайнар көзі болып табылатын киелі жерлер мен кесенелер Қазақстанда көптеп кездеседі. Ғасырлар бойы қалыптасып келген киелі жерлер, тарихи оқиғаларға куә болып, халықтың өткені мен болашағын байланыстырады. Алайда, осы маңызды объектілерді зерттеу шеңбері олардың тарихы, архитектурасы, құрылысы тағы басқаларынан әрі аспауда. Киелі жерлердің адамға берер психологиялық әсері орасан зор екендігін ескерсек дін психологиясы тарапынан да зерттелуі заңды құбылыс. Киелі жерлердің шығу тарихы, психологиялық бастаулары, классификациясы мақаламызда баяндалды. Зерттеу барысы Қазақстандағы түрлі киелі жерлерге барып, адамдардан сауалнама өткізу, сұхбат алу және бақылау жасау арқылы жүзеге асты. Мақалада киелі жерге барушының психологиялық жай-күйі сипатталды. Зиярат жасаушылардың білім деңгейі мен киелі жерге деген көзқарастарына анализ жасалды. Шет елдік зерттеулерден сілтемелер алынып, салыстырмалы түрде ғылыми талдаулар жасалды. Зерттеуде киелі жер мен кесене зияратының себептері, адамға берер әсерлері және тағы да басқа мәселелер егжей тегжейлі талданды.

Түйін сөздер: халық діндарлығы; киелі жер; кесене; зиярат; дұға; тілек; әсер.

Аннотация. В Казахстане сосредоточено множество святынь и мавзолеев, которые выступают важными центрами национальной религиозной традиции. Святыни, формировавшиеся на протяжении веков, свидетельствуют об исторических событиях и связывают прошлое и будущее народа. Однако сфера изучения этих важных объектов не выходит за рамки их истории, архитектуры, строительства и т. д. Учитывая огромное психологическое воздействие святынь на человека, вполне естественно, что их изучают также с точки зрения религиозной психологии. В статье описана история происхождения, психологические истоки и классификация святынь. Исследовательский процесс проводился путем посещения различных святынь Казахстана, проведения опросов, интервью и наблюдений. В статье описывается психологическое состояние посетителя святыни. Выявлен уровень образования паломников и их отношение к святыням. Приведены ссылки на зарубежные исследования и проведен сравнительный анализ. В исследовании подробно проанализированы причины посещения святынь и мавзолеев, их влияние и другие вопросы.
Ключевые слова: народная религиозность; святая земля; мавзолей; паломничество; молитва; желание; влияние.

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Introduction

The idea of being holy is really important to a lot of people, the Kazakh people. They have a lot of history and stories that have been passed down, even if some of it is not totally clear. These stories and ideas are still really important to them. If you look at the things that the Kazakh people consider sacred, like objects and ideas, you can see how these things have spread throughout their culture. In Kazakhstan, a lot of the ideas that come from Islam actually started with old traditions that have been around for a long time, such as the reverence for nature and ancestor worship, which continue to influence their cultural practices and beliefs today. The Kazakh people have a connection to these sacred concepts, and they are still a big part of their lives today.

The concept of holiness holds significant importance for many individuals, particularly among the Kazakh populace. They possess a wealth of history and narratives that have been transmitted, albeit certain aspects remain somewhat ambiguous. These narratives and concepts remain significantly important to them. An examination of the sacred artifacts and concepts revered by the Kazakh people reveals their pervasive influence inside the society. In Kazakhstan, numerous Islamic concepts originated from ancient traditions, like the veneration of nature and ancestor worship, which persistently shape contemporary cultural behaviors and beliefs. The Kazakh people maintain a profound connection to these spiritual beliefs, which continue to play a significant role in their lives today (Köse, 2010: 16-17).

Myths and narratives concerning locations significantly enhance individuals' reverence for these areas. certain legends frequently address the sanctity and significance of certain locations. It is said that making a wish in proximity to certain locations may result in its fulfillment. This instills a sense of security in individuals.

Individuals believe that these sacred locations possess advantageous attributes. They contend that these settings can facilitate spiritually uplifting or transformational experiences. They believe these sites can alleviate their ailments, including chronic pain and mental health disorders, while offering spiritual solace. They believe these sites can assist with issues like infertility and facilitate childbearing by offering resources, support, and information on reproductive health.

This results in frequent visits to these sites by several individuals. They anticipate the necessity of revisiting these sites in the future. Individuals desire to experience the vitality of these locations. They seek proximity to the elements that render these sites sacred, including their historical importance, spiritual experiences, and communal assemblies that take place there. A multitude of folks experience a connection to these locations. They have faith in the potency of these locations. They believe these platforms have the potential to transform their lives (Alzhanova, 2020: 7-13).

In certain locations, the sanctuary and the collective perception of a community are intricately linked. They are so intertwined that separation is impossible. For residents of Mangystau, their identity includes being Adai, Kazakh, Muslim, and adherents of Beket Ata. These elements are interconnected for them. The inhabitants of Mangystau regard the sanctuary and their identity as a singular entity. Identifying as Adai and being from Mangystau is synonymous with being Kazakh, Muslim, and adhering to the teachings of Beket Ata (Bigozhin, 2020: 25-35).

The national heritage of Kazakhstan is of significant importance. It encompasses numerous historical edifices such as mausoleums, tombs, and cemeteries. These sites are devoted to saints and notable individuals from Kazakhstan's history, including poets and significant figures. Kazakhstan is home to numerous archaeological sites featuring artifacts from the Bronze and early Iron Ages, including petroglyphs, geoglyphs, ancient villages, and burial mounds. These ancient sites constitute 20% of all historic locations in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's history encompasses significant figures and events, such as the era of the Golden Horde and the Kazakh Khanate, which constitute approximately 12% of its historical sites. Then there are the sites that are considered sacred, and these make up about 9% of all the culturally important places in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's national heritage, including these sites and old buildings, is very special and important to the people of Kazakhstan (Tsyrempilov et al., 2020: 136-150).

The country has 30,000 old buildings and monuments that are really important for history and culture and religion. These old buildings and monuments are all over the country, and they show us what life was like from a long time ago to now. The thing is, not all of these buildings and monuments are being taken care of properly. So sometimes people do not even know about some of these shrines, and they are not appreciated as they should be. Historical monuments like these are important. People should know about them (Bolatkzy, 2020: 4).

When examining these places, they can be grouped as follows:

- Sacred things that existed before Islam came.
- Sacred things that honor people who helped spread Islam when it first arrived.
- Sacred things connected to the start of Islam and the growth of Sufism.
- Places that represent women.

Kazakhstan has tombs for holy mothers. In Kazakh cultures, women are highly respected. That's a big part of who we are. Holy mothers did a lot for their communities, like raising kids and being involved in activities. They played a role in society. That's why their tombs are still important and people visit them often.

There are also:

- Places of refuge built by people who weren't religious but helped create khanates and governments.
- Sacred places made during times. Big architectural projects built in the century (Bolatkzy, 2020: 9-10).

Individuals exhibit a real interest in locations such as religious shrines and mausoleums in contemporary society. These locations evoke memories of the past and assist in the exploration of our identity. They also address a deficiency in our culture that we see as absent. Our research examines these locations and mausoleums. It is noteworthy that individuals from diverse backgrounds appreciate these locations, not solely those with extensive education. We seek to ascertain the significance of these locations to individuals. We believe it relates to prior events and the emotions these locations evoke in us. Our main goal is to learn more about the history of these sites and what they mean to people.

People are going to sites more often, and this is something that is happening in our country, too. These sites are very important to people. They have been for a very long time. We know that old rituals are still done today, and they are a part of how we learn and grow, as they provide a sense of connection to our heritage and foster community among participants. So what makes people want to go to these sites? What happens to someone when they go to the Holy Land? Does going on a pilgrimage make people feel better about themselves? Does it matter if someone goes to a school or a religious school when it comes to how often they visit the Holy Land? Is there a connection between believing in a saint and what kind of education you have? The Holy Land is a place that people visit for various reasons. How does what you learn in school affect what you believe about getting what you want? We think these are questions to ask about sacred sites and the Holy Land. We are keen to learn more about why people go to these places and what it means to them.

The goal of this study is to find out why people go to the Holy Land and what they want to get out of it. How they feel when they are there. People who know a lot about the Holy Land and people who do not know much have different ideas about it. So we will look at what people know about the Holy Land and how they feel about going on a pilgrimage at the same time. We will consider the Holy Land and what people think about it.

A hypothesis is like a guess that we think might be true. We need to test this guess to see if it really is true. A hypothesis is not a fact until we do some research and look at the numbers. We have to collect data. Then look at it carefully to see if our hypothesis is correct. We can only confirm our hypothesis after all this work. A hypothesis is an idea that we want to test to see if it is true, so we do research to find out (Arslanoğlu, 2016: 84-85). The hypothesis we formulated based on prior research and observations is as follows:

An inverse relationship exists between a person's level of knowledge and the frequency of visits to the Holy Land. Individuals with limited knowledge are generally more inclined to seek assistance from the Holy Land.

Individuals possessing a lower level of knowledge are more likely to hold the belief that their wishes will be realized following a visit to the Holy Land.

Individuals with insufficient religious knowledge frequently engage in pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Those with minimal religious knowledge tend to anticipate receiving support from the Holy Land.

Methodology

We did a lot of research. We used surveys and interviews to get information. It was not possible to visit every holy site and mausoleum in Kazakhstan, so we picked a few important places to study closely: the holy sites and mausoleums in Kazakhstan. These included the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the mausoleum of Arystan Bab, the mausoleum of Ibrahim Ata, the mausoleum of Raiymbek Batyr, the mausoleum of Haji Ata, the mausoleum of Baidibek Ata, the mausoleum of AZ Almerik Ata, the mausoleum of Domalak Ana, the mausoleum of Kurban Ata,

the mausoleum of Uzbekali Zhanibek, the Mausoleum and well of Ukasha Ata, the mausoleum of Kozi Baizovi, the mausoleum of Karashash Ana, the Cave of Aulie Akmeshit, the zhylak Ata spring, the vanished Eren forty Shilten, and the AZ Almerrek Baba Spring. We randomly selected 269 visitors to these sites to participate in the survey, which was distributed to individuals aged 13 and older. People from various regions of Kazakhstan frequently visit these sacred sites and mausoleums.

The psychology of religion is grounded in various material sources, including theoretical perspectives on religion, verbal expressions, responses obtained through surveys and interviews, and personal documents (Peker, 2022: 60). Our questionnaire has four parts with 30 questions in total.

- Socio-Demographic Questions: We have 8 questions that ask about things like gender, age, if you are married, what you studied, what you do, how much money you make, and where you live.

- Religious Beliefs and Practices: This section has 6 questions that ask about what you believe in, what you think about God, where you get your knowledge, what you think about fasting and prayer, and how much you know about your religion.

- Alcohol Consumption: We have 2 questions that ask what you believe regarding drinking alcohol and, if you drink, how often you do.

- Visiting Sacred Sites: This part includes 14 questions that inquire about your knowledge of the holy site, your desire to visit, the frequency of your visits, whether your family accompanies you, your beliefs about the assistance of saints, your activities while there, your reasons for going, your feelings about the experience, your thoughts on whether your wishes will come true if you return after making a wish, your understanding of the site, and the restrictions you must follow.

The information we got from the questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, which is also known as SPSS version 21.0. This software is a known program that is very good at handling lots of complicated data. Initially, frequency distributions were calculated to summarize the fundamental characteristics of the first dataset. Following this, cross-tabulations were used to examine relationships among categorical variables, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the data patterns. To determine the significance of these relationships, chi-square tests were performed with a significance threshold of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). This rigorous statistical framework ensures the validity and reliability of the findings, thereby providing a solid foundation for further interpretation and conclusions.

The research was conducted using surveys, observations, and interviews at sacred sites. Participants were initially informed about the study; only those who provided consent were given questionnaires and invited to participate in interviews. After the questionnaires were completed, participants were selected, and those who did not offer comprehensive responses were excluded from the analysis. It is important to note that the results of this study may be limited to the period during which it was conducted (July 2018 – September 2018) and may not reflect changes that occurred on significant dates such as Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, Ramadan, and others.

The primary focus of this research is the psychosocial characteristics of pilgrims visiting sacred sites and mausoleums in Kazakhstan, with particular emphasis on differences between men and women during the pilgrimage experience. To conduct this research, a combination of observational methods, questionnaires, and interviews was employed, with multiple sample sites selected for analysis. In addition to administering questionnaires, external monitoring of participants and face-to-face interviews were conducted. Some questions from the questionnaire were further elaborated in these interviews, enabling the methods to complement one another effectively.

A substantial number of studies, both directly and indirectly related to this topic, were reviewed. While many of these works approached the subject from varying perspectives, their analyses contributed significantly to the broader discussion covered in this article.

The research was conducted at sacred sites across Kazakhstan, using a random sample of individuals who participated in the pilgrimage. Face-to-face conversations were conducted with these participants over three months, from July to September 2018, as part of a three-year comprehensive study.

Main part

Historical and cultural origins of the sanctuary

The concept of the Holy Land is well established, tracing its origins back to the ancient Turks. One can readily observe the remnants of that era in various rituals. Sacred sites have undergone shifts in history and culture over the centuries, leaving us with indicators of past ages. Consequently, we can categorize the holy places and mausoleums that emerged across different historical periods into several distinct groups.

G. Snesev, an ethnographer from the Soviet era, focused on developing a typology of holy places. Through his study of legends and narratives about saints, Snesev identified four main types of sacred sites: 1) Saints with an undefined image, lacking individual names and simple dwellings; 2) Characters from Biblical and Quranic texts, including figures from early Islamic history; 3) Sufi saints from the Middle Ages, who were generally popular and localized; and 4) Representatives of local authorities whose tombs inadvertently became sites of worship.

Additionally, another classification is proposed based on the affiliation of these holy places: 1) Ancient heroes; 2) Prophets and figures from the Quran; 3) Companions of the Prophet Muhammad; 4) Sufis; 5) Clan totems; and 6) «New descendants» of the saints.

Holy sites are also categorized based on their recognition and geographical distribution: 1) Recognized throughout Central Asia; 2) Known within a specific region or locality; 3) Familiar only to a limited area. Moreover, according to the various structures present near the temple, these shrines can be classified as follows: 1) Single-piece (featuring only one sacred element such as a water source, tree, or rock); 2) Two-piece (with either a fake or real tomb); 3) Complex (including a mausoleum); 4) Featuring a Khanakah; 5) Including a mausoleum and vaults; 6) Featuring a mausoleum and a mosque; and 7) Comprising a mausoleum, mosque, and madrasah (Kamalova, F.B.: 34-35).

The Scientific and Expert Council of the research center has classified sacred objects into five distinct categories:

1) Monuments of Natural Heritage: These sites, held in high esteem, include locations considered sacred by local communities. Some of these places have formed as a result of natural phenomena and are now under state protection.

2) Archaeological Sites and Medieval Urban Centers: This category encompasses towns, fortresses, petroglyphs, burial sites, and medieval cities that have played a pivotal role in the development of the Kazakh people, contributing to the establishment of the Kazakh state and the Great Silk Road.

3) Religious Sites and Places of Worship: This includes shrines associated with various saints. The names linked to the pre-Turkic era encompass legendary, ancient Turkic, and medieval figures, as well as historical figures from the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

4) Sacred Sites Connected to Historical Figures: Certain Khans who dedicated their lives to the freedom and sovereignty of Kazakhstan hold significant places in history. This group also recognizes the heroes of the three zhuz, individuals who addressed critical national issues, Kazakh warriors who fought for the independence of the Khanate, leaders of the National Liberation Movement, as well as influential commanders, public figures, poets, scientists, and educators who advanced science, education, and culture.

5) Sacred Sites Related to Political and Historical Events: The Kazakh steppe is home to new symbols of statehood that hold a significant position in the nation's history. These monuments symbolize the country's unity and commemorate the Kazakh people's struggles for unity, valor, and resilience (Kamalova, 2020: 37).

The expansion of Islam has led to a significant intermingling of diverse cultural practices and belief systems. As the religion spread across regions, it often assimilated local customs, fostering a tolerance generally embraced by the populace. This phenomenon is frequently cited as a pivotal moment in human history due to its profound impact on societal structures. The reverence associated with Islamic burial practices has also contributed to the transformation of gravesites into mausoleums, commonly referred to as such (Köse, 2010: 16).

In ancient times, the Turks held a profound reverence for their ancestors. Their belief in what their ancestors observed from above was closely intertwined with the Islamic faith in God. This blend of beliefs gradually brought to prominence concepts such as the Tomb, Tomb Care, the Night of the Tomb, and the candle holder. By examining the beliefs and rituals of those who visit the mausoleum, one can discern elements of animism, ancestor worship, the cult of the dead, and the veneration of nature (including mountains, trees, and water). Additionally, aspects of the cult of fire, sacrifice, prosperity, and rebirth, as well as the pervasive influence of mysticism and magic, are found throughout Central Asia (Köse, 2010: 18).

The Turks traditionally constructed mounds composed of earth or shrubs, with an inner structure of wood or stone and an outer layer of soil. It has been observed that the location of the tent where the deceased was positioned was later occupied by mausoleums. Historical records indicate that the Turks also erected structures over graves, symbolizing the wars fought by the deceased [9, p. 21]. Additionally, the ancient Turks maintained the custom of placing balbal stones at the burial sites of their leaders and heroes. These balbal stones, found throughout the Kazakh Steppe, reflect an ancient culture that practiced Tengriism before the advent of Islam. This mausoleum, adorned with balbal stones, has remarkably preserved its original appearance to this day (Bolatkyzy, 2020: 56).

The transition from the worship of ancestors to the veneration of saints marks a significant shift in religious practices. This transformation facilitated the incorporation of representatives from various faiths into Islamic centers, where they became engaged with Islamic beliefs and narratives. Furthermore, the reinterpretation of local legends within an Islamic framework exemplifies the adaptive nature of religious traditions. Concurrently, the appropriation of sacred spaces for Islamic use underscores the broader dynamics of religious transition and cultural integration within this context (Altan, 2007: 16-18). Foundational beliefs regarding the visitation of mausoleums are also evident in Christianity. Historically, it has been common within the Christian tradition to visit saints' shrines to express devotion and make a wish, thereby highlighting the significance of these sacred sites in the spiritual lives of the faithful (Özkan, 2009: 21). The Turks exhibit a notable influence from the Nestorian orientation of Christianity, which has historically shaped their cultural and religious perspectives. This influence underscores the complex interplay between various religious traditions in the region and the impact of Nestorian beliefs on Turkish identity and social structure (Yılmaz, 2012: 15). The practice of lighting candles is likely prevalent in both Christianity and ancient Turkic traditions. It was customary among the Turks to keep a light burning in their homes for forty days, on the belief that the soul of the deceased would not be left in darkness during the funeral rituals. This analogy highlights the interplay between religious customs and the symbolic use of light in mourning and remembrance (Özkan, 2009: 24). The practice of illuminating the graves of saints by lighting candles can be attributed, in part, to specific verses of the Quran, the Prophet's hadiths, and the pronouncements of various notable figures. This tradition reflects a fusion of religious texts and cultural customs that underscores the significance of honoring revered individuals within the spiritual landscape (Yazar, 426-427).

The relationship between the «cult of ancestors» among the Turks and the «cult of Saints» following the adoption of Islam presents a fascinating intersection of cultural and religious practices. Historically, the reverence for ancestral spirits and the pride associated with their achievements underwent a significant transformation within the Islamic framework, which inherently prohibits certain ancestral veneration practices. This transition led to a shift toward the veneration of saints, who were perceived as intermediaries between the faithful and the divine. Consequently, it became customary to invoke prayers in the names of saints, as they were regarded as individuals uniquely proximate to God (Artun, 1999: 366). In his writings, Maulana articulates the belief that prolonged observation of a saint's tomb often leads to an individual's compliance and faith in the saint's sanctity, suggesting that such devotion could elicit divine grace and fulfill the supplicant's desires (Yazar, 423). The positioning of these tombs is notable; they were typically established adjacent to prominent mosques and madrasas, thereby reinforcing their sacred status within the tariqats and emphasizing their significance as spiritual sites revered by their followers (Yazar, 426-427).

Psychosocial context of pilgrimage to the Holy Land

When examining sacred sites, it is essential to consider two interrelated dimensions: the inherent physical attributes of these locations and the subjective consciousness that designates them as sacred. The Holy Land exemplifies this interplay, embodying both tangible characteristics and the collective perception that elevates its status (Devereux, 2000: 11).

The phenomenon of pilgrimage is deeply rooted in human history. Historically, humanity has expressed skepticism toward the enigmatic aspects of existence, prompting rituals to demystify the unknown and imbue these experiences with sanctity. This enduring practice persists today, as individuals continue to ascribe significance to specific objects, such as the Saint-wallet or the Tombs of revered figures, which frequently become focal points for pilgrimage [Yılmaz, 2012: 1]. Additionally, the effects of the Holy Land on human psychology are complex and varied, further enriching the discourse surrounding sacred spaces (Köse, 2010: 47):

An individual engages with an enigmatic realm that eludes conventional perception, disrupting the monotony of daily routines. The experience alleviates symptoms of depression and stress while eliciting novel sensory experiences. This transformation encompasses the removal of negativity, the cessation of detrimental habits, and the projection of one's best self, collectively fostering a sense of comfort and well-being.

The onset of these mysterious occurrences is often catalyzed by interactions within sacred spaces. Engaging in rituals such as touching sacred walls, venerating objects, imbibing from wells or springs, bathing, collecting stones, offering monetary tokens, and tying fabrics evokes a profound sense of sanctity and provides spiritual solace.

The complexities of religious mysteries are disclosed through sacred sites, instilling a renewed sense of purpose in life. Negative and tragic circumstances can be reframed from alternative perspectives, enabling a more optimistic interpretation. With a clarified life purpose, individuals experience enhanced well-being and are more inclined to journey to holy locales. This elevation of spiritual significance fosters zeal, motivating individuals to pursue ethical and religious development. The practice of rituals, the making of sacrifices, and the fulfillment of vows will fundamentally shape one's religious trajectory.

The significance attributed to the Holy Land is fundamentally influenced by individuals' diverse needs and belief systems. Generally, pilgrims are motivated by a variety of purposes, including: seeking physical and spiritual healing; voicing petitions, expressing gratitude to saints; seeking absolution from sins; escaping the routine of daily life; manifesting the strength of their religious convictions; and participating in communal festivities, among other reasons (Barrie, 1996: 31).

The prevailing perception among individuals is that rituals are conducted incessantly. A significant factor contributing to the widespread adherence to these rituals is the widespread belief that they are integral to traditional religious practices (Köse, 2010: 25). Consequently, this belief fosters an understanding of a constructed worldview. The actions and practices upheld by previous generations are legitimized when societal norms and teachings are transmitted to subsequent generations. In this regard, parents, by perpetuating the social narratives they have inherited, reinforce their own beliefs. Ideas and actions become entrenched in collective consciousness, thereby acquiring a robust semblance of truth. As such, a corporate, historical, and objective truth, along with the phenomena that stem from it, manifests before us (Köse, 2010: 39-40).

In Kazakhstan, the Tombs of certain saints have emerged as significant emblems of Muslim identity within specific settlements and tribal affiliations. The local populace exhibits an intricate interweaving of tribal, religious, and ethnic identities. For instance, the identity of being an Adai in Mangystau, in conjunction with Kazakh nationality, Islamic faith, and adherence to the teachings of Beket Ata, is of equal importance in the community's social and cultural consciousness. This multifaceted identity highlights the complex dynamics of cultural heritage and religious affiliation among the residents (Bigozhin, 2020: 25-36).

Mangystau is renowned for its association with 362 Saints, a number that holds significant sacred value among the region's inhabitants. This reverence manifests in various aspects of daily life; for instance, individuals often choose apartments with the number «362» and display this numeral on their vehicles. Such practices are rooted in the cultural belief that the ancestral spirit provides ongoing support and protection, thus reinforcing the importance of the number within the local community (Bolatkyzy, 2020: 33).

In exploring the intricate relationship between general, religious, and mystical phenomena, it becomes evident that conventional modes of communication often fall short. In this context, symbols serve as pivotal intermediaries that emerge from the dichotomy between various states of consciousness. This phenomenon can be understood as a manifestation of the alienation of an individual's inner and outer selves, a process exacerbated by the constraints imposed by modern rationality, scientific paradigms, and technological advancement.

Symbols function as a crucial bridge, facilitating connections between different layers of consciousness and the subconscious mind. As Joseph Henderson articulated, these can be referred to as «symbols of transcendence,» wherein images arising from the depths of the subconscious ascend into conscious awareness. Given that the essence of humanity is intrinsically tied to the contemplation of existence, the symbols that emerge in this bridging capacity play a crucial role in addressing existential questions. Notably, this «bridge» may also manifest in more tangible forms, such as variations in color perception, further illustrating the multifaceted nature of symbolic interpretation and understanding (Barrie, 1996: 12).

In conclusion, sacred sites and mausoleums in Kazakhstan play a significant role in fostering national independence and promoting social cohesion among the populace. Observations indicate a consistent increase in visitor numbers to these locations over the years. Individuals are drawn to these sites for various reasons: many seek spiritual solace, others engage in tourism, and some come to pay their respects to the spirits of their ancestors. This multifaceted engagement underscores the cultural and historical importance of these places within the context of Kazakhstan's national identity.

The analysis findings on the impact of educational attainment on attitudes toward mausoleums and sacred sites

Religious beliefs exhibit variability that correlates with an individual's level of education. In our study, we conducted analyses of participants' knowledge base. To enhance the clarity of our findings, we implemented modifications to present a more coherent analysis. The inherent dispersion of questionnaire responses can often obfuscate the clarity of the results. Consequently, we reorganized the educational attainment of participants into the following categories:

- Responses from individuals lacking literacy skills, as well as those who possess basic literacy, have completed primary education, or attained secondary education, were collectively categorized under «Secondary Education.»
- Responses from graduates of vocational schools and colleges were classified under the designation «Lyceum.»
- Responses from individuals holding university degrees were grouped under «Higher Education.»
- Responses from those who have completed Master's or Doctoral programs were categorized as «Postgraduate Education.»

This reclassification aims to provide a more structured understanding of the relationship between educational attainment and religious beliefs.

The relationship between educational attainment variability and the frequency of visits to sacred sites

Acquiring knowledge significantly enhances an individual's capacity for rational thought. Consequently, it is evident that visiting sacred sites, encompassing religious reasoning, emotional engagement, fervent devotion, and worshipful practices, has a substantial impact on one's intellectual and spiritual development.

Table 1

Educational attainment and frequency of visiting the holy land

Educational attainment			Frequency of Visiting the Holy Land			Total
My first visit			I often come			
I come from time to time						
	Secondary education	N	5	33	14	52
		%	9.6%	63.5%	26.9%	100.0%
	Lyceum	N	7	31	8	46
		%	15.2%	67.4%	17.4%	100.0%
	Higher Education	N	17	131	18	166
		%	10.2%	78.9%	10.8%	100.0%
	Postgraduate Education	N	2	24	6	32
		%	6.2%	75.0%	18.8%	100.0%
Total		N	31	219	46	296
%		10.5%	74.0%	15.5%	100.0%	

$$X^2=10,183 \text{ sd}=6 \text{ P}=.117$$

The data presented in the table indicate that 26.9% of participants with secondary education, 17.4% of lyceum graduates, 10.8% of individuals possessing higher education, and 18.8% of those with post-university qualifications

reported frequent visits to pilgrimage sites. Among participants, 63.5% of those with secondary education, 67.4% of lyceum graduates, 78.9% of those with higher education, and 75% of those with postgraduate education reported such behavior.

Although a higher proportion of individuals with secondary education exhibit frequent visits, and a greater percentage of those with higher education exhibit occasional visits, a chi-square test revealed that these differences were not statistically significant ($\chi^2(6, n=296) = 10.183, p > 0.050$). This suggests that the relationship between participants' education level and their frequency of visits to pilgrimage sites is not statistically significant. Consequently, our hypothesis that higher educational attainment is associated with fewer visits to holy places was not supported by the findings.

Research on religiosity has revealed significant correlations between educational attainment and religious belief. A study by Acar and colleagues found a notable decline in religiosity with increasing educational attainment (Acar et al., 2018: 50). Furthermore, Gunay's research highlights that individuals with limited or no formal education tend to exhibit higher levels of dogmatism and traditionalism, as well as a propensity to embrace beliefs with minimal critical examination (Arslan, 2004: 210).

A detailed investigation conducted in the İskilip district revealed a negative correlation between educational attainment and adherence to popular religious practices. Specifically, individuals with higher educational attainment exhibited a marked decline in their commitment to such expressions of faith. In contrast, those with lower levels of education maintained a stronger attachment to popular religious beliefs. This observation aligns with Mustafa's hypothesis, which posited that the degree of adherence to popular religiosity tends to be inversely related to educational level, as evidenced by the finding that individuals with advanced education demonstrate lower levels of commitment compared to those who are uneducated possess limited educational qualifications (Arslan, 2004: 210). Furthermore, Asiye Altan's research corroborated her hypothesis, indicating no significant difference in shrine-visit frequency between highly educated individuals and those with no formal education or minimal educational exposure (Altan, 2007: 73-74).

In conclusion, although prior assumptions suggested a correlation between educational attainment and visitation to sacred sites and mausoleums, our findings do not support this hypothesis. This discrepancy can be attributed to the multifaceted motivations that drive individuals to visit these locations. As discussed, numerous visitors are motivated by factors such as tourism, cultural engagement, and familial obligations. These motivations extend beyond religious considerations and significantly contribute to our findings. Consequently, our research underscores that sacred sites and mausoleums are frequented for a variety of reasons, thereby challenging the notion that their visitation is solely religious in origin. Such a narrow perspective is inadequate for fully understanding the complex dynamics at play in these contexts.

The correlation between educational attainment and the reliance on intercessory support from saints

When individuals visit a sacred site or a mausoleum, they are often motivated by the belief that such places possess unique metaphysical qualities. Discussions with visitors reveal that many are seeking transformative experiences and resolutions to personal challenges. Each sacred site, irrespective of its specific attributes, is imbued with qualities associated with sanctity. Importantly, the validation of such beliefs does not necessitate the presence of a grave physical marker at the location. Rather, the rich tapestry of popular legends and narratives circulating within communities provides compelling evidence of the significance of these sites. Consequently, visitors arrive with hopes and prayers directed toward the saintly supernatural entity associated with the site, anticipating guidance or assistance in their endeavors.

Table 2**Educational attainment and belief in the intercessory power of saints**

Educational attainment			The Faith in the Intercessory Power of Saints			Total
Will definitely help			I don't believe it will help			
Might help						
	Secondary education	N	17	22	13	52
		%	32.7%	42.3%	25.0%	100.0%
	Lyceum	N	19	12	15	46
		%	41.3%	26.1%	32.6%	100.0%
	Higher Education	N	27	79	60	166
		%	16.3%	47.6%	36.1%	100.0%
	Postgraduate Education	N	5	14	13	32
		%	15.6%	43.8%	40.6%	100.0%
Total		N	68	127	101	296
%		23.0%	42.9%	34.1%	100.0%	

$$\chi^2=18,656 \text{ sd}=6 \text{ P}=.005$$

The findings of our research reveal distinct patterns in perceptions of assistance by educational attainment. Specifically, 32.7% of participants with secondary education, 41.3% of those who graduated from lyceum, 16.3% of individuals with higher education, and 15.6% of participants possessing postgraduate qualifications expressed a firm belief in the likelihood of receiving help from others. Conversely, 25% of participants with secondary education, 32.6% of lyceum graduates, 36.1% of individuals with higher education, and 40.6% of those with postgraduate education reported a lack of confidence in receiving assistance.

Notably, lyceum graduates exhibited a statistically significantly higher level of confidence in the potential for aid, evidenced by a lower proportion of respondents anticipating help. Furthermore, among participants who expressed disbelief in the likelihood of receiving assistance, the proportion of skeptics increases with higher levels of educational attainment. The lowest prevalence of disbelief is observed among individuals with secondary education, whereas the highest prevalence is found among those with postgraduate qualifications. This trend underscores the complex relationship between education and perceptions of social support.

The analysis revealed a statistically significant association between participants' educational levels and their belief in the saint's capacity to assist, as indicated by a chi-square test (χ^2 (6, n=296) = 18.656, $p < 0.050$). This finding suggests a meaningful correlation: individuals with lower educational attainment are more likely to seek help from sacred places. Consequently, our hypothesis that individuals with reduced levels of education are more likely to turn to sacred sites for support has been substantiated.

Semra Yilmaz's research findings align closely with our own. A significant correlation was identified between educational attainment and the perception that mausoleums are predominantly visited to seek relief from hardship or adversity. Specifically, as educational levels increased, the belief that mausoleums primarily serve to alleviate suffering declined. At the Sheikh Şaban-ı Veli Tomb, approximately 55% of visitors with primary education endorsed the view that such sites are visited for relief from difficulties, compared with 39% of secondary school completers, 47% of high school graduates, 31% of vocational college graduates, and 27% of university graduates. Similarly, at the Mevlana Mausoleum, 55% of primary education visitors supported this view, whereas only 48% of secondary school graduates, 34% of high school graduates, 25% of vocational college graduates, and 25% of university graduates expressed similar sentiments. Moreover, the data indicate that as educational attainment increased, the proportion of individuals who rejected the notion that mausoleums are primarily places to seek solace from suffering also increased. Notably, 28% of primary-school visitors to the Sheikh Şaban-ı Veli Mausoleum did not subscribe to this belief, compared with 45% of university-educated visitors. At the Mevlana Mausoleum, 35% of visitors with

primary education dismissed this view, while 55% of faculty graduates did not support it. These findings suggest a notable shift in perceptions by educational background, warranting further exploration of the underlying factors shaping these attitudes (Yılmaz, 2012: 92).

Our findings indicate a significant correlation between participants' educational attainment and their perceptions of the efficacy of saints' supernatural sites. Specifically, the data reveal that belief in such forms of assistance tends to increase as educational levels decline, whereas this belief diminishes among individuals with higher educational qualifications. These results are consistent with various studies conducted in Turkey, suggesting a parallel in the engagement with sacred sites and mausoleums in both contexts. This highlights a broader trend in the intersection of education and belief in the supernatural across different cultures.

The observed phenomenon indicates that a significant proportion of visitors to sacred sites are motivated by the challenges they face in their lives. In accordance with Islamic teachings, although ultimate assistance should be sought from Allah Almighty, individuals frequently turn to these holy places in search of support and solace. When questioned about their motivations, many articulate a belief that, although the ultimate source of help is Allah, the saint's intercession, viewed as a beloved servant of Allah, plays a crucial role in the fulfillment of their supplications. This duality reflects both a strict monotheistic framework and a cultural reverence for the saints within the Islamic tradition.

The correlation between educational attainment and the belief in wish fulfillment following pilgrimage experiences

Visitors often consider various factors that may contribute to the fulfillment of their wishes at sacred sites. It is posited that these locations possess a unique spiritual purity, which is attributed to the presence of holy individuals. Given the proximity of these figures to the divine, it is widely believed that visitors' aspirations are more likely to be realized in this world. This intersection of spirituality and human desire at sacred sites warrants further exploration in religious studies and psychology.

The findings of our study indicate variability in belief levels among individuals concerning the fulfillment of wishes. We categorized participants by educational attainment to examine the association between confidence in wish fulfillment and educational attainment. The data reveal that, following their visit, a substantial proportion of participants expressed belief in the realization of their wishes: 73.1% of those with secondary education, 63% of lyceum graduates, 64.5% of individuals with higher education, and 40.6% of participants possessing post-university education reported confidence in wish fulfillment. Conversely, the percentage of participants who expressed skepticism about the realization of their wishes was 26.9% among those with secondary education, 37% among lyceum graduates, 35.5% among holders of higher education, and 59.4% among post-university graduates.

A statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship between educational level and confidence in wish fulfillment, with the Pearson chi-squared statistic calculated as X^2 (df=3, n=296) = 9.304, $p < 0.050$. This indicates a statistically significant association between visitors' educational background and their belief in the likelihood of wish fulfillment after the pilgrimage. Our findings support the hypothesis that individuals with lower levels of education are more likely to believe that their wishes will be fulfilled following the pilgrimage.

In Semra Yılmaz's research, a comprehensive analysis examined the correlation between educational attainment and the belief that «the individual interred within the mausoleum is a sacred figure, thereby rendering wishes uttered in that location more likely to be fulfilled.» The findings indicated a negative correlation between increasing levels of education and the endorsement of this belief among visitors. Specifically, at Sheikh Shaban-ı Veli Mausoleum, approximately 67% of primary school graduates, 58% of secondary school completers, 70% of high school graduates, 43% of vocational school graduates, and 38% of university graduates supported the aforementioned belief. Similarly, at the Mevlana Mausoleum, support was observed among 69% of primary school graduates, 67% of secondary school graduates, 41% of high school graduates, 41% of vocational school graduates, and 40% of university graduates.

The data reveal a pronounced trend: as educational attainment increases, belief in the vulnerability of individuals interred in mausolea and in the greater likelihood that their prayers are accepted declines. Notably, a significant disparity emerged between the viewpoints of those with primary education, where only 8% maintained this belief, and those who had completed higher education, where 33% held this belief. This pattern was similarly evident among visitors to the Mevlana Mausoleum. These findings contribute to the understanding of how educational levels

intersect with spiritual beliefs, highlighting that, despite the general trend of decreased belief with higher education, approximately half of highly educated respondents continued to express support for these beliefs (Yilmaz, 2012: 110).

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that participants' educational attainment significantly influences their belief in the fulfillment of wishes made at sacred sites. This study indicates that individuals with lower levels of education exhibit a greater conviction in the efficacy of such wishes. In contrast, those with higher levels of schooling demonstrate a more skeptical stance. This phenomenon may be attributed to the development of rational thought, critical analytical skills, and heightened self-efficacy that individuals acquire through their educational experiences. Conversely, individuals with limited academic backgrounds often exhibit tendencies toward imitation, heightened emotional sensitivity, and greater susceptibility to external influences.

The findings from the analysis concerning the impact of religious knowledge on attitudes towards mausoleums and sacred sites

Understanding the significance of religious knowledge among individuals visiting sacred sites and mausoleums is commendable, particularly given that these locations are often frequented for religious pilgrimage purposes. Visitors motivated by spiritual devotion frequently encounter challenges stemming from an inadequate understanding of fundamental religious tenets. Engaging in actions that contravene established religious practices, such as idolatry, improper conduct, inability to recite the Quran, and uncritical imitation of others' behavior, can result in significant violations of both prohibitions and the proper etiquette that should guide such visits.

Empirical observations indicate considerable variation in the level of religious knowledge among visitors, with a substantial number exhibiting a markedly low understanding of relevant beliefs and practices. This is evidenced by the limited presence of designated religious authorities, the scarcity of individuals proficient in Quranic recitation, the need for many to seek guidance on appropriate pilgrimage etiquette, and the prevalence of behaviors that contravene traditional religious norms. Collectively, these factors underscore a concerning deficit in religious knowledge that warrants further examination and intervention to enhance pilgrims' spiritual experience.

Table 3

The correlation between the depth of religious knowledge and the frequency of visitation to sacred sites

Degree of religious knowledge			Frequency of Visiting the Holy Land			Total
My first visit			I often come			
I come from time to time						
	Insufficient	N	7	34	6	47
		%	14.9%	72.3%	12.8%	100.0%
	Average	N	18	116	27	161
		%	11.2%	72.0%	16.8%	100.0%
	Good	N	6	69	13	88
		%	6.8%	78.4%	14.8%	100.0%
Total		N	31	219	46	296
%		10.5%	74.0%	15.5%	100.0%	

$$X^2=2,831 \text{ sd}=4 \text{ P}=.587$$

In our initial analysis, we found that the proportion of cells with an expected value below 5 exceeded 20% of the total, at 55.0%. Consequently, the interpretation of the significance test results was deemed invalid. It was anticipated that by synthesizing the responses from individuals who reported 'I come on holy days and nights' with those categorized as 'I come occasionally,' as well as combining responses indicating 'my religious knowledge is very insufficient' with the preceding category of 'insufficient,' and merging those who asserted 'my religious knowledge is very good' with the prior classification of 'good,' the aggregate of cells with expected values below 5 would diminish to below the 20% threshold.

To facilitate this, we employed a recode procedure to generate new variables. In the revised attendance variable, individuals who indicated 'I come on sacred days and nights' were consolidated with those who answered 'I come occasionally,' resulting in a new category labeled 'I come occasionally.' Similarly, within the religious knowledge construct, respondents who stated 'my religious knowledge is very insufficient' were amalgamated with those who responded 'insufficient,' resulting in a new category titled 'insufficient.' Furthermore, the cohort of individuals who reported 'my religious knowledge is excellent' was combined with those who categorized their knowledge as 'good,' resulting in the designation of 'good' for this new category. After implementing these modifications, we re-executed the chi-square test, and the results are presented in the subsequent table.

As indicated in the table, among those who reported their level of religious knowledge as insufficient, 14.9% identified themselves as first-time visitors, 72.3% reported visiting occasionally, and 12.8% reported visiting frequently. Among individuals who considered their religious knowledge average, 11.2% were first-timers, 72% visited occasionally, and 16.8% visited frequently. Among those who rated their spiritual knowledge as good, 6.8% reported being first-time visitors, 78.4% reported visiting occasionally, and 14.8% reported visiting frequently. The findings suggest that as religious knowledge decreases, the proportion of first-time visitors increases. Interestingly, those with a good level of spiritual knowledge had the highest proportion of occasional visitors. However, the chi-square test results indicate that this difference is not statistically significant.

The analysis revealed that the relationship between participants' level of religious knowledge and their frequency of attendance was not statistically significant, $X^2(df=4, n=296)=2.831, p>0.050$. In other words, there is no significant correlation between visitors' level of religious knowledge and their frequency of visiting sacred places. Therefore, our hypothesis that «individuals with lower religious knowledge visit sacred places more frequently» was not supported.

Table 4

The interplay between the extent of religious knowledge and the belief in the intercessory role of saints

Degree of religious knowledge			The Epistemological Significance of Faith in the Intercession of Saints			Total
It will definitely help			I don't believe it will help			
It may help						
	Too insufficient	N	0	2	4	6
		%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	Insufficient	N	5	24	12	41
		%	12.2%	58.5%	29.3%	100.0%
	Average	N	35	70	56	161
		%	21.7%	43.5%	34.8%	100.0%
	Good	N	21	22	21	64
		%	32.8%	34.4%	32.8%	100.0%
Very good	N	7	9	8	24	
	%	29.2%	37.5%	33.3%	100.0%	
Total		N	68	127	101	296
%		23.0%	42.9%	34.1%	100.0%	

$$X^2=12,583 \text{ sd}=8 \text{ P}=.127$$

The data presented in the table illustrates the correlation between individuals' perceptions of their religious knowledge and their beliefs regarding the efficacy of sacred sites in providing assistance. Among respondents who classified their religious knowledge as «very insufficient,» none expressed a definitive belief that they would receive help; conversely, 33.3% indicated they might receive help, while 66.7% maintained that they did not believe they would. Among those who identified their religious knowledge as «insufficient,» 12.2% believed they would definitely

receive assistance, 58.5% thought it possible, and 29.3% were skeptical of receiving help.

For those with moderate religious knowledge, 21.7% expressed a definite belief in receiving help, 43.5% entertained the possibility, and 34.8% did not believe assistance would be forthcoming. Among individuals with good religious knowledge, the belief in certain forms of help rose to 32.8%, while 34.4% thought assistance might occur, and 32.8% did not believe they would receive help. Finally, among respondents who rated their religious knowledge as «very good,» 29.2% were confident they would receive assistance, 37.5% thought they might, and 33.3% were doubtful.

A noteworthy trend emerges from these observations: as individuals' self-assessed religious knowledge decreases, the proportion of respondents who report a definite belief in receiving help declines. The highest level of skepticism about potential help was observed among those who categorized their religious knowledge as «very insufficient.» However, from a statistical perspective, the observed differences across groups did not reach statistical significance (χ^2 (df=8, n=296)=12.583, $p>0.050$). Thus, the results indicate no significant correlation between visitors' religious knowledge and their beliefs about the assistance provided by a saint at a sacred site. Consequently, our hypothesis positing that individuals with lower religious knowledge are more inclined to expect help from sacred sites was not supported.

Conclusion

The findings from our research indicate that educational attainment significantly influences religious beliefs. Our analysis revealed no substantial correlation between individuals' educational attainment and the frequency of their visits to sacred sites. This observation suggests that there is no discernible difference in visit frequency between individuals with lower educational backgrounds and those with higher educational qualifications. However, other studies have reported varying results. In our investigation, we propose that the observed trends may be attributed to diverse motivations for visiting these sites, such as tourism, cultural exploration, and family obligations, rather than to purely religious intent. This suggests that visits to sacred locations and tombs are not exclusively driven by religious motives, highlighting that a unidimensional perspective is inadequate for understanding these phenomena.

Additionally, we examined the belief in the efficacy of the saint's spirit in providing assistance and found an inverse relationship between participants' educational levels and their confidence in receiving help. Specifically, as educational attainment decreased, participants expressed greater confidence in the likelihood of receiving aid. This finding aligns with research conducted in Turkey, which indicates that, while most visitors acknowledge that divine assistance originates solely from God in traditional religious beliefs, they are nonetheless inclined to seek intercession from saints when deemed appropriate. This observed behavior illustrates William James's assertion that beliefs are deemed valid not because they necessarily reflect truth, but because they serve a practical purpose for individuals.

Individuals who express a high likelihood that their wishes will be fulfilled in certain environments predominantly have lower educational attainment. In contrast, among individuals with higher levels of education, this belief is significantly less prevalent. This discrepancy can be attributed to the enhanced rational and critical thinking skills typically developed through higher education. In contrast, individuals with limited educational opportunities often exhibit tendencies toward imitation, heightened suggestibility, and increased sensitivity to external influences.

Religious knowledge significantly influences the experience of visiting sacred sites. Individuals with a robust understanding of their faith are generally more aware of the associated etiquette and regulations, enabling them to engage with these spaces more meaningfully. Such individuals often display a deeper devotion to texts such as the Quran and possess insights into the mystical dimensions of their tradition, which enable a more liberated expression of their spirituality.

Conversely, individuals with limited religious knowledge tend to emulate others' behaviors, often relying on external cues to determine appropriate conduct. Our observations indicated that a lack of understanding of the relevant etiquette and rules frequently led to behaviors considered inappropriate in sacred sites. These behaviors included, but were not limited to, grasping the walls of mausoleums, circumambulating multiple times, tying pieces of cloth, tossing money, stacking stones, exhibiting overt emotional displays, and engaging in other similar practices, all of which can be interpreted as manifestations of insufficient religious understanding.

Furthermore, our findings revealed no significant difference in the frequency of visits to sacred sites among individuals with varying levels of religious knowledge. Additionally, when examining beliefs about the perceived

efficacy of seeking assistance from holy sites, statistical analyses found no significant difference between individuals with higher and lower levels of religious knowledge.

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